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Report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women on the elimination of violence against women

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith to the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women the report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women on the activities of the Fund to eliminate violence against women, which was prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/166 of 22 December 1995.

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Implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/166 on the role of the United Nations Development Fund for Women in eliminating violence against women

Report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women to the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on Human Rights and the forty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women

I. Introduction

1. General Assembly resolution 50/166 of 22 December 1995 provided the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) with the mandate to strengthen its activities aimed at eliminating violence against women in order to accelerate the implementation of the recommendations set out in the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action. In doing so, UNIFEM was mandated to work closely with the relevant agencies and bodies of the United Nations as part of the system-wide efforts to eliminate violence against women.

2. In 1996, UNIFEM developed the Trust Fund in Support of Action to Eliminate Violence against Women. Since that time it has continued to identify and support innovative and catalytic projects around the world aimed at breaking new ground, creating new models and mobilizing new constituencies in the growing movement to eradicate gender-based violence in all its manifestations. As such, the Trust Fund serves as a launching pad for a wide range of effective new strategies to end violence.

3. In 2000, the process leading up to and including the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender, equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", gave strong reaffirmation to activities addressing gender-based violence within the international community. The initiatives contained in the outcome document of the special session have the potential to strengthen programmes and policies to end violence against women. Specific forms of violence against women were added to the international agenda at the twenty-third special session, namely so-called honour killings and dowry-related deaths. UNIFEM will give priority to these issues in the selection of new Trust Fund projects for 2001, as well as to the call issued at the special session for an exploration of positive role models for men to be used as a tool in the struggle to eliminate violence against women.

4. The present report to the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on Human Rights and the forty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women documents the dynamic and ground-breaking activities undertaken by UNIFEM during 2000 to eliminate violence against women.

II. Trust Fund in Support of Action to Eliminate Violence against Women

5. The UNIFEM Trust Fund in Support of Action to Eliminate Violence Against Women provides support to innovative and catalytic initiatives that seek to prevent and eliminate violence against women at the local, national, regional and global levels. Since it began operating in 1997, the Trust Fund has received contributions of over US$ 5.4 million and funded a total of 105 projects in more than 65 countries around the world. In every region, norms have been challenged, innovative legislation has been introduced, new partners have been enlisted and policies have been changed through the work of the Trust Fund.

6. In 2000, the Trust Fund made grants of US$ 1 million; requests, however, totalled more than $12.5 million. The funds were allocated to 17 projects[1] with the approval of the Inter-Agency Project Appraisal Committee. The Committee included representatives from the Division for the Advancement of Women; the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention; the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); as well as a representative of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working the area of violence against women.

7. The 17 projects selected for funding in 2000 addressed diverse forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, trafficking and sexual exploitation, honour killings, sexual harassment, and violence against disabled girls and women. Projects apply strategies ranging from public awareness raising and education, to advocacy, legal literacy, training for professionals, action-oriented research and service provision and training and mobilization of women's groups. For example:

(a) Modelled on a successful project in Latin America, a regional project in Africa will train magistrates and judges in Kenya, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe in the area of women's human rights, with particular focus on issues of violence against women. Only one of eight judges at the pilot training project had ever cited an international convention in any judgement; by the project's end, a cadre of 600 judicial officers and academic experts will be equipped to lead country-specific interactive training sessions for judges on these issues;

(b) Following up on a previous Trust Fund project, NGOs in Jordan and the West Bank are using a two-pronged approach to address the problem of so-called honour killings, by conducting research to develop safe methods of disclosure for girls at risk and simultaneously working with judges in order to improve the delivery of justice and the treatment of survivors;

(c) Taking into account the impact of global markets on women's security, technical assistance is being provided to 21 Brazilian cities to strengthen capacity for local level initiatives and to support regionally integrated programmes and policies to eliminate violence against women;

(d) Rural women and girls often have few resources to assist them and to protect them from violence. To address this problem, a project in Kyrgyzstan is training rural women, senior pupils, schoolteachers and parents in methods of preventing violence, as well as in recovery skills. Trainees in peer-led support groups provide assistance to victims and act as intermediaries with law enforcement agents to help ensure appropriate response in cases of violence.

8. A thorough review of Trust Fund operational guidelines was conducted in early 2000. Guideline revisions gave greater responsibility to the field for selecting proposals to ensure that initiatives contribute to regional strategies.

9. To encourage projects with increased potential, the management of the Trust Fund recommended revising operational guidelines to raise the maximum Trust Fund grant from $50,000 to $150,000 for proposals jointly submitted by two or more organizations. Under this new framework, six Trust Fund grants were awarded to joint proposals in 2000.

10. With support from a United Nations Foundation grant, a special call for project proposals focusing on media and documentation has been issued and over 250 proposals received. In early 2001, the Inter-Agency Project Appraisal Committee, including experts in the media and communications for social change, will select four to eight projects for funding.

11. The twenty-third special session of the General Assembly provided UNIFEM with an opportunity to showcase the work of several Trust Fund projects. An information kit was prepared and distributed at the gathering highlighting lessons learned from three Trust Fund projects selected as case studies for an upcoming UNIFEM publication (see sect. III below). While attending the conference, women leaders from nine projects were interviewed about their personal stories, which were then turned into articles and posted on the UNIFEM web site.

III. The Trust Fund learning component of the United Nations Development Fund for Women

12. The Trust Fund Learning Component, supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, has focused on the review and analysis of lessons learned from the catalytic and innovative Trust Fund initiatives. Field visits conducted for the learning component in five countries highlighted effective strategies for changing attitudes, reversing stereotypes and eliminating harmful practices. These strategies were undertaken by relatively small, discrete projects that are most likely to foster enduring structural/institutional change and to work towards eliminating violence against women.

13. UNIFEM compiled some of these findings into a publication entitled "With an End in Sight: Strategies from the UNIFEM Trust Fund in Support of Action to

Eliminate Violence Against Women". Focusing on seven model Trust Fund projects from different regions, the book identified three critical strategies in the fight against gender-based violence: building community commitment, fostering institutional partnerships and developing public and institutional support through research and advocacy. The book has been shaped as a practical tool and an inspirational guide on innovative and successful strategies. Copies have been widely distributed to UNIFEM and UNDP field staff, heads of United Nations agencies, donors, Trust Fund grantees, and other NGOs and foundations working in the area of women's human rights.

IV. Capacity development for Trust Fund Grantees

14. In 1999, UNIFEM received a grant from the United Nations Foundation to expand the capacity of Trust Fund grantees to document their work and to integrate effective communications and media strategies towards advancing their project goals.

15. In the spring of 2000, UNIFEM undertook an assessment of the effectiveness of media and communication materials developed and used during United Nations inter-agency campaigns to eliminate violence against women. This study, in collaboration with Columbia University, focused on media campaign strategies in Kenya, India and Peru. Working with locally based advertising agencies, the study identified tools that are effective in local contexts around the world. The comparative analysis of the three sites yielded important lessons and recommendations to enhance the effectiveness and impact of future initiatives. The analysis also stressed the need to depict the problem of violence realistically and/or to create an image-driven rather than text-driven medium. Media messages drew greater attention when they went beyond articulating the problem to offering solutions and suggesting strategies for response to violence and offering contact information for help.

16. Findings from the study and other end-violence campaigns are being used in the creation of a catalogue and interactive CD-ROM showcasing examples of effective media strategies from around the world. The catalogue and CD-ROM will provide detailed information about various campaigns to eliminate gender-based violence, recommend effective ways of using campaign materials and allow individuals to download and use images directly from the CD.

V. Translating advocacy work into programming

17. During the period from 1997 to 1999, inter-agency regional campaigns to eliminate violence against women were launched in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Asia and the Pacific. These UNIFEM-led campaigns were developed and implemented with the active participation of other agencies of the United Nations system, such as UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV), the International Labour Organization (ILO), Habitat, UNHCR and the United Nations regional economic commissions, along with a variety of governmental and non-governmental partners. These campaigns dramatically increased awareness of violence against women as a violation of human rights at the community, national and regional levels.

18. In 2000, the reverberating impacts created by regional campaigns spearheaded by UNIFEM in 1998 and 1999 continued. For example:

(a) In response to heavy media attention to the issue of violence against women, created as part of the UNIFEM-led regional campaign, the Kenyan Parliament adopted the country's first legislation on domestic violence, which was notable for its strong and decisive language;

(b) As a follow-up to the regional campaign to end violence against women, an unprecedented effort has been made in South Asia to focus on the problem of trafficking in women. UNIFEM is playing a lead role in orchestrating the formulation and implementation of activities, working closely with Governments, donors, United Nations partners, and NGOs;

(c) In the Andean region, campaign-related training for indigenous and peasant women, lawyers and justice administrators contributed to the initiation or strengthening of laws to prevent violence against women in Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia.

19. The success of other regional campaigns and the collection of materials produced has led to the current planning for an end-violence campaign in the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)/ Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) region in 2001, to be coordinated by the Government of Kazakhstan.

VI. Addressing the diverse forms of gender-based violence

20. Economic issues became the focus of UNIFEM regional office approaches to violence against women in the year 2000. Trafficking of women and girls was a major focus in the South Asia region in particular, which effectively placed trafficking on the agendas of donors and Governments, facilitated regional collaboration and provided leadership in developing a comprehensive campaign against trafficking. Obtaining Ministerial level commitment to strengthening national mechanisms was pivotal to establishing anti-trafficking secretariats/cells in every country. UNIFEM has supported strengthened networks of lawyers and police such as the Technical Advisory Group in South Asia (TAGSA), the South Asia Forum against Human Trafficking (SAFAHT), and the South Asia Professionals against Trafficking (SAPAT). Training was also provided to border police, lawyers and judges and a high-level goodwill ambassador against trafficking in South Asia was appointed (Ms. Manisha Koirala, who hails from Nepal, but is a leading screen presence in Bollywood, the Mumbai film world).

21. Other examples of projects in different regions include:

(a) A new youth-focused intervention to prevent trafficking in adolescents in Latvia;

(b) Protection of migrant women workers' human rights in Western Asia, the Pacific, South and South-East Asia, and Central America;

(c) Creation of a national monitoring system and toll-free phone line to address the growing problem of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents from the UNIFEM Brazil-Southern Cone office.

22. Eradicating domestic violence is a continuing priority in all UNIFEM field offices. In Ukraine, a UNIFEM capacity-building project is contributing to a major advocacy campaign to adopt and implement a draft law on domestic violence. UNIFEM support to the Ukrainian Young Women's Leaders' network has increased the capacity of young women leaders to advocate for their rights. Many of these young women have joined forces with established women's NGOs in a campaign calling for better enforcement of domestic violence laws. In the Sudan, a high-level conference was organized by the UNIFEM office for countries in East and Central Africa and in the Horn of Africa to address "honour-killings", drawing upon action research in this area from an innovative Trust Fund project in the West Bank and Gaza, which is now being replicated in Jordan.

23. Violence against women in the context of conflict situations is an increasing concern in a number of regions. Most notably, UNIFEM was the first agency to conduct an assessment of violence against women in Kosovo. Findings from this assessment have been requested by and shared with partners in the region. Utilizing linkages with a recipient of a Trust Fund grant, the Croatia Centre for Women War Victims, UNIFEM is working to strengthen the technical skills and capacities of local institutions and individuals in Tajikistan, focusing on the psychological rehabilitation needs of war-affected communities and abused women. Towards that end, activities included training of 53 trainers on gender issues and violence against women, along with the collection of data on violence against women in Tajikistan.

VII. Conclusions

24. In 2000, UNIFEM committed itself to building on the solid advocacy campaigns it has established with other United Nations partners in various regions of the world. In consolidating this work, UNIFEM identified lessons learned and best practices developed in Trust Fund projects and campaigns to distil key programming areas for the future. UNIFEM built on advocacy and capacity development to translate lessons learned from advocacy work into programmes. UNIFEM is drawing experience from this pioneering work to ensure that future projects benefit from experience in the past and learning from other regions, NGOs and United Nations agencies.

25. In the spirit of General Assembly resolution 50/166, UNIFEM will continue to identify and support innovative local, national, regional and international

initiatives to prevent and eliminate violence against women.

Notes

[1] Seventeen projects were selected for funding in 2000: Africa: Algeria, Morocco, the United Republic of Tanzania and a regional project executed in Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe; Asia and the Pacific: Bangladesh, Mongolia, Yemen and a regional project in Jordan and the West Bank; Central and Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States: Bulgaria, Croatia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russian Federation; Latin America and the Caribbean: Brazil, Jamaica, Mexico and Peru. Project descriptions are available on the UNIFEM web site: *www.undp.org/unifem/trust.htm*.